

Bathurst
Essex County, Virginia

HABS No. VA-129

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PHOTOGRAPHS
WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA
District of Virginia

Historic American Buildings Survey
Major Eugene Bradbury, District Officer, A.I.A.
210 East Franklin Street, Richmond, Virginia

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BATHURST
Essex County, Virginia

Owner: Mrs. Hugh Mercer Curtler, Charlottesville, Virginia

Date of Erection: No documentary evidence has been found but believed to have been prior to 1700.

Architect:

Builder: Mr. Alfred Bagby, Jr., in letter dated November 12, 1936, places Lancelot Bathurst, Baronet, as builder. William and Mary Quarterly Historical Magazine, Volume No. XXV, places builder as Francis Meriwether, son-in-law of Lancelot Bathurst.

Present Condition: The exterior is remarkably unaltered, the only evidences of change being a concrete floor in the porch and replacement of the porch posts. The structure is in very poor condition and a number of the window sash and doors are gone. The building had been sold by the owner of the property, Mr. George Kriete, to Mrs. Hugh Mercer Curtler, and at the time of survey, all the interior woodwork had been removed.

Number of Stories: One story and a half.

Materials of Construction: The foundation walls and chimneys are brick, averaging $8\frac{1}{2} \times 4 \times 2\frac{5}{6}$ inches in size, with $\frac{3}{8}$ inch mortar joints. The bond of the foundation walls irregular but the chimneys up to the upper offset laid in Flemish bond with glazed headers. Above this point stretcher bond. The walls above foundation are frame, lathed and plastered, the exterior walls covered with pine weatherboards, beaded, except the front wall under porch which is covered with flush boards, laid horizontally. The walls of the front portion of the building are brickknogged. The roofs are covered with shingles.

Other Existing Records: The following is taken from William and Mary College Quarterly Historical Magazine, Volume XXV:

"Bathurst was built by Frances Meriwether, the old clerk of Essex Co., circa 1692, and received its name from his marriage with Mary Bathurst, daughter of Lancelot Bathurst, of Essex County, Virginia, son of Sir Edward Bathurst of Gloucestershire, England, and his second wife, Susan Rich. Upon the death of

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Francois Meriwether's widow in 1740, the land was divided among his heirs, and the 'Bathurst' tract fell to the wife of Theodorick Bland. Bland sold it to Francis Smith who married Lucy, a daughter of Francis Meriwether, from them it descended to their son Meriwether Smith, first member of Congress from that district, patriot, etc. From him it passed to his son, George William Smith, who became Governor of Virginia, lost his life in the burning of the Richmond theatre, who early sold 'Bathurst', to Major Thomas Ap Thomas Jones, whose mother was the daughter of Mary, another daughter of Francis Meriwether, and her husband James Skelton. From them it descended to their only son, Thomas Ap Thomas Jones, the grandfather of Judge Lewis H. Jones, who sold it for 3,950 pounds in 1800, and moved to Kentucky."

A note on the Bathurst Family written by Dr. Christopher Johnston, of Johns Hopkins University, appeared in the William and Mary Quarterly Historical Magazine, Volume VIII:

"Lancelot Bathurst born 1646, came to Virginia before 1680, is entered in the Visitation of Gloucestershire of 1682 as 'Lancelot Bathurst, of Virginia, married there and living at 36 in 1682.' Granted 1300 acres in New Kent County April 16, 1683 (Book, VII., p. 269) and had other grants later (Virginia Land Records) Appointed August 1, 1684, by Edmund Jennings Attorney-General of Virginia, his deputy for Henrico County (Virginia Historical Society Col. X 372) On list of Virginia attorneys 1680 (Virginia Magazine, I., 252) Clerk of the Committee on Private Causes, and of Committee on Examination of Records, 1689 (Palmer's Calendar, I, 22) Justice of New Kent County, 1699, 1702, (Virginia Magazine, I, 235, 369). Lancelot Bathurst and his wife had issue: i. Lawrence Bathurst, died unmarried, will Dec. 29, 1704, proved Feb. 11, 1705, in Essex County, mentions bro.-in-law, William Daingerfield. ii. Elizabeth Bathurst, married first William Tomlin, who died in 1708, and second in 1709, William Daingerfield. iii. (Mary Bathurst, married first Francis Meriwether, second Reuben Welch, third Hon. John Robinson.) iv. Susanna Bathurst, married Drury Stith, who died 1740."

The following is taken from the Vestry Book of St. Peter's Parish, 1682 - 1758:

"At a Vestry hold at St. Peter's parish Church on ye behalf of ye s'd parish this 3rd day of Sept., 1688.

"It is ordered by this present vestry that Mr. Gideon Macon do & is hereby impowered to appear before his Excelansy Francis Lord Howard, Baron of Effingham, his Majes' Left. Gen'l of Virga. & ye Hon'l Counsell of States upon ye 10th day of ye next Gen'l Court in obedience to an order of his Excell. to y't purpose to answer ye

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complaint of Mr. Lancelott Bathurst, attorney of ye vestry of Blissland parish, concerning dividing line to be run between ye parish of Bliesland & ye parish of St. Peter'e."

"St. Peter's at a Veetry held at the House of Mr. Gideon Macon this 18 day of December, 1697.

"Capt. Lancelott Bathurst, high Sheriffe of New Kent County, is ordered to Collect from each tithable person in this parish forty-two pounds of Tobacco: to defray the parish Charge and make payment to the eeverall persone to whom it is proportioned: and in cae of non payment to make Destres according to Law, and that the Clark deliver a copy of Charge to Capt. Bathurst and take hie Receipt for the same."

In the William and Mary Quarterly Historical Magazine, Volume XXV, is the following:

"Col. Meriwether Smith, of 'Bathurst,' Essex County, born 1730; died at 'Marigold,' Essex Co., 24 Jan., 1794. (Family Record.) He was vestryman of South Farnham and justice; a signer of the Northern Neck Association, 1766; member of Essex Committee of Safety, 1774; member of the House of Burgeesee for Essex, 1774 - '75; of the Virginia Conventions of 1775, 1776, and 1788; of the Privy Council, 1776, 1780 - '81, 1783 - '85; of the Virginia House of Delegates, 1777, 1782, 1786, 1789; of the Old Congress, 1778 - '82. (Appleton's Cyc. Am. Biog.; quarterly, V., p. 254; Va. Hist. Col. X, p. 372; Legislature Lists.)

"Administration on his estate was granted 21 Apr., 1794, to his son Geo. William Smith. (Essex Records.) From contemporary notices it would appear that Col. Meriwether Smith was a man of some eccentricity of character, but 'much conversant with affaires, both public and private,' and in the public council took an active and conspicuous part. John Augustine Washington, writing 18 May, 1776, classed him among the five best speakers in the convention of 1776, to which convention he had brought the draught of a constitution for Virginia, of which there are records among the papers of his son and grandson, (Gov. Geo. William and John Adams Smith) the same 'sketched constitution' to which Madison referred in a letter written in 1827. (Post, Note 1.) At the least, he shared largely in the work of the committee by which that important document was finally submitted to the convention. He was a member of the Committee of Congress in 1779 to consider and report on what terms the United States would be willing to terminate war, and was delegate to the Annapolis Convention of 1786, but did not attend. He 'was undoubtedly,' says Rives in his Life of Madison, 'a man of mark in his day, as is sufficiently attested by the circumstance of

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his being named second on the committee to prepare the Declaration of Rights and a plan of government, as well as by the many public offices --- which he afterwards filled.'

"Gov. George William Smith, of Essex Co., and Richmond, Virginia, born in 1762; lost his life in the burning of Richmond theatre, 26 Dec. 1811. He was a lawyer, member of the House of Delegates for Essex, 1791 - '94, and for Richmond City, 1802 - 08; of the Privy Council, 1809; Lieutenant-Governor, 1810, Governor of Virginia, 1811. (Legislative Lists; Brock's Virginia and Virginians, I., pp. 108-112.) He married first, 7 Feb., 1793, Sarah (born 14 Jan., 1766; died Sept. 1806), fourth daughter of the elder Col. Richard Adams, of Richmond. (Quarterly, v. p. 162.) He married, secondly, Jane, widow of Meriwether Jones, editor of the Richmond Examiner, and daughter of _____ Reade, M. D., of Hanover Co., by whom he had no issue.

"The following extracts are from letters in the possession of Bathurst Lee Smith, Esq., of Knoxville, Tenn.

"From an unfinished letter written by Geo. William Smith shortly before his death.

"Inclosed you will find a copy of the paper entitled "The American Crisis," which was written by my father (Meriwether Smith) in 1776, and also of the notes enclosed by the proceedings which were then moved by himself and adopted by the General Assembly and which may be seen in the Journal of that session. I have also the original manuscript of the Bill of Rights as written by him. Besides these, I find among his papers many others, that you may choose to peruse at your leisure, respecting alliance with France, of which he was in Congress the most zealous, and not the least powerful, advocate; the negotiations for peace; the instructions relative to both, which were drawn by him; reflections upon the report of the Secretary of the Treasury relative to the funding system, and which I will with pleasure furnish. The copy inclosed is intended for your own perusal. However, I should not object to your friend Mr. Strode seeing it; but as hitherto I have had, so now I have reasons why I should not show his papers or speak generally of the services of my father in the commencement of and during the Revolution. The evidences of his patriotism show that it was not less influential in directing and fixing the destinies of his country than it was bold and manly and honourable for himself."

As recorded in the William and Mary College Quarterly Historical Magazine, Volume XII:

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"Mary Bathurst survived her husband, Frances Meriwether, and married secondly Reuben Welch; thirdly, Hon. John Robinson. By her marriage with Francis Meriwether, --- she had issue, (1) Elizabeth, who married Drury Bolling, of Prince George County, Virginia, who had Frances Bolling, married Theodorick Bland; (2) Francis Meriwether; (3) Jane, married James Skelton, of Essex County; (4) Mary, married, first, William Calston, of Essex County, second, Thomas Wright Belfield, of Richmond County, Va., (5) Thomas, who died unmarried; (6) Lucy who married Col. Francis Smith, of Gloucester Co."

Additional Data: In Mr. Alfred Bagby, Jr.'s letter dated November 12th, 1936, is the following statement:

"I have visited the place (Bathurst in Essex County) perhaps a dozen times and I think you will find the following substantially accurate. Apparently no one knows when the house was built or who the architect or builder was, but the sheathing, nails, etc. show that it is very old. I am confident that the present weatherboarding and roof are not original, but the interior is.

"The house was built by Lancelot Bathurst, who was a baronet, for his daughter Mary (note: She married for the third time) John Robinson, sometime acting Governor of Virginia, who was father of speaker Robinson and an ancestor of Governor Pollard and myself.), who married Francis Meriweather, who came to Essex from Jamestown Island not later than 1692, and was one of the first cleke of Essex County. The house is frame, and I feel sure is one of the very oldest frame houses in Virginia to survive. There is a peculiarity in that there are two sheds flanking the house open at the sides.

"One of Francis Meriweather's daughters (Mary ordinarily called Lady Bathurst) married Francis Smith, whose son, Meriweather Smith was in the Revolutionary period one of the most prominent men in Virginia, and an ardent patriot. It has been claimed that he was the real author of the Virginia Bill of Rights. His son, George William Smith, was the Governor who lost his life in the Richmond theater fire disaster. From George William Smith are descended some of the Pollards of King William County. From George William Smith, Bathurst passed into the hands of a family named Jones, who came from the Northern Neck, and the last Jones sold the farm for \$20,000.00 to Lawrence Muse. The present owner is George Kriete of Dunnsville. When the last Jones left Bathurst to settle in Kentucky he wrote his wife that he hoped the sweet birds of Bathurst would enjoy another such friend as they had experienced in him. The farm is on the lower

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side of Piscataway Creek about three-fourths of a mile from the Rappahannock River, and it is a beautiful site, the house being built in a bend of the Creek and commanding a fine view of the river."

Bibliography:

William and Mary College Quarterly Historical Magazine,
Volumes VIII, XII and XXV. Editor: Lyon G. Tyler,
M.A., LL.D.; General Printers: Whittet and Shepperson.
July 1899 - April 1900, July 1903 - April 1904,
July 1916 - April 1917.

Mr. Alfred Bagby, Jr.'s letter dated November twelfth 1936.
Address: Attorney and Counsellor, 111 North Charles Street,
Baltimore, Maryland.

The Vestry Book of Saint Peter's, New Kent County, Virginia,
1682 - 1758. (Photostatic of the original manuscript.)
Filed in the Archives Department of the Virginia State
Library.

Virginia Thompson
Historian

Approved: December 30, 1936

Eugene Bradbury
MAJOR EUGENE BRADBURY, A.I.A.
District Officer
District of Virginia

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